



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES

VOL. XXVIII.

BALTIMORE, JANUARY, 1913.

No. 1.

AN AMERICAN HOMILETIC BALLAD

A recent writer,¹ dealing with the subject of negro folk-song, its social and psychological antecedents, in the course of his exposition, makes the following statement:

"In the 'Downward Road is Crowded,' a mournful picture is given of the sinner who failed to repent. His example is held up for the contemplation of those who are following in his steps.

Young people who delight in sin,
I tell you what I lately seen,
A po' godless sinner die,
And he said, 'In hell I soon'll lie!'

Hark, the downward road is crowded, crowded,
crowded,
Yes, the downward road is crowded with onbe-
lievin' souls.

He call his mother to his bed,
An' these is the dyin' words he said,
'Mother, mother, I long farewell,
Your wicked son is damned in hell.'

He dance an' play hisself away,
An' still put off his dyin' day,
Until at las' ole death was sent,
An' it 'us too late fer him to repent."

That this is too sophisticated even for a negro preacher, and bears moreover, too certain evidence of a literary origin, seems not to have suggested itself. There is nothing in it of the irregularity of structure and incoherence that marks genuine negro folk-songs of the type of *Roll, Jordan, roll!* or *Swing low, sweet Chariot*, evident creations out of the white heat of religious fervor, and surrounded by the atmosphere of the camp-meeting. What we have in fact, is a versified crude sermon, a homiletic discourse in ballad form. Instances of the religious, nay even of the homiletical or theological ballad, it may be stated in passing, are

¹ Howard W. Odum, "Religious Folk-Songs of the Southern Negroes," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, III, 311.

found even in the older strata of English folk-song,—we may cite *The Cherry Tree Carol*,² *The Carnal and the Crane*,³ *Dives and Lazarus*,⁴ not to mention the lately discovered *Bitter Withy*.⁵ The ballad at present under discussion is doubly interesting, not only as an instance of the homiletic application of the ballad idea, but also as being one of the few attested American traditional ballads.⁶

Given a theme in its simplest form,—“young person lives a worldly life, rejects means of grace, and, dying, is numbered with the lost,” familiar enough in the discourses of evangelists from the time of the Great Awakening on,—it appears that two closely similar developments of it in American balladry have taken place. We cannot fairly call them two ballads, in the sense that *Baby Lon* and *Edward* are two ballads.⁷ The one is a counterpart of the other.

The material at hand may here be put in evidence.⁸

Theme: Impenitent-sinner-lost.

Form I. *The Downward Road*.

A. Lamentable Death of Polly.⁹

1. Young people who delight in sin
I'll tell you what has lately been
A woman who was young and fair
Who died in sin and sad despair

² Child, 54.

³ Child, 55.

⁴ Child, 56.

⁵ F. Sidgwick, *Folk-Lore*, 1908, pp. 190-200. See also *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. IV, pp. 29-47.

⁶ See my article, "Native Balladry in America," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XXII, pp. 365-373.

⁷ Ballad based on identical themes emerge in different strata of British balladry,—their relation to one another problematical. See my article, *A Garland of Ballads*, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 446-454.

⁸ For the use of the Missouri texts of this ballad, I am indebted to the kindness of Professor Henry M. Belden, University of Missouri.

⁹ *Boston Transcript*, 1906; *Notes and Queries*, no. 3970, from C. N. G., who says of it,—“it was found in some old papers of my family, and was evidently

2. She'd go to frolics dance and play
In spite of all her friends could say
I'll turn to God when I get old
And he will then receive my soul

3. One Friday morning she took sick
Her stubborn heart began to break
Alas alas my days are spent
Good God too late for to repent

4. She called her mother to her bed
Her eyes were rolling in her head
When I am dead remember well
Your wicked Polly screams in hell

5. The tears are lost you shed for me
My soul is lost I plainly see
O mamma mamma fare you well
My soul is lost and doomed to hell

6. My earthly father fare you well
My soul will soon be dragged to hell ¹⁰

written down by one of a group of young women at some time in the decade 1830-1840. They were members of a New England colony which early in the century had migrated from Charlemonst, Mass., to what is now West Virginia, and from there went to Edwards County, Illinois. . . . I should judge that it was written down from memory."

¹⁰ John D. Swain, *New England Magazine*, April, 1907, pp. 244-5, records a different version, which he traces to the early days of Little Rest (now Kingstons), R. I., where Polly is believed to have lived.

WICKED POLLY.

O young people, hark while I relate
The story of poor Polly's fate!
She was a lady young and fair
And died a-groaning in despair.

She would go to balls and dance and play
In spite of all her friends could say;
"I'll turn" said she, "when I am old,
And God will then receive my soul."

One Sabbath morning she fell sick;
Her stubborn heart began to ache.
She cries, "Alas, my days are spent!
It is too late now to repent."

She called her mother to her bed,
Her eyes were rolling in her head;
A ghastly look she did assume;
She cries, "Alas I am undone!"

"My loving father, you I leave;
For wicked Polly do not grieve;
For I must burn forevermore,
When thousand thousand years are o'er.

B. The Dying Girl Unprepared to Meet Her God.¹¹

By Rev. J. H. Lewis.¹²

1. Young people who delight in sin,
I'll tell you what I've lately seen,—
A poor ungodly woman died
Who said in hell she soon would lie.

Chorus,—

The downward road is crowded, crowded, crowded,
The downward road is crowded with unbelieving
souls.

2. She danced and played her days away,
And still put off her dying day;
Her parents shed many a tear,
Their daughter was to them so dear.

3. One Friday morning she took sick,
Her stubborn heart began to break.
She cried, "Alas my days are spent;
It's too late for me to repent."

4. Such ringing of hands,
Such gnashing of teeth—
No redemption—no relief.

5. She called her mother to her bed,
And these, her dying words she said:
"When I am dead, remember well
Your wicked daughter screams in hell."

"Your councils I have slighted all,
My carnal appetite to fill.
When I am dead, remember well
Your wicked Polly groans in hell!"

She (w) rung her hands and groaned and cried,
And gnawed her tongue before she died,
Her nails turned black, her voice did fail,
She died and left this lower vale.

May this a warning be to those
That love the ways that Polly chose,
Turn from your sins, lest you, like her,
Shall leave this world in black despair!

There is in the seventh stanza, an evident reminiscence of the language of Michael Wigglesworth's poem, *The Day of Doom*.

¹¹ Contributed by Professor Belden, as "copied from a single sheet print, circa 5" x 10", sent me by Mrs. C. H. G——, March 16, 1909. Mrs. G—— heard her laundress singing the piece, and got the sheet from her."

¹² Not the author, of course.

6. "Oh, mother, mother, fare you well
Your daughter's soul is damned in hell;
O father, father, fare you well,
Your daughter's soul is damned in hell.
7. The tears are lost you shed for me,
My soul is lost—I plainly see
The aming raft (sic!) begins to roll,
And now I'm gone, a ruined soul.
8. Young people who doth slight the Lord,
Take warning by my dying word:
You may escape those burning flames
Although I am damned in endless pains.
9. She gnawed her tongue before she died,
She foamed and groaned, she screamed and cried,
Oh, must I burn for evermore,
Till thousands and thousands of years are o'er?¹³
10. At length the monster death prevailed,
Her nails turned black, and her language failed;
Her eyes she closed, her heart-strings tore,
And the daughter is gone for evermore.
11. It almost broke her parents' heart,
To see their child to hell depart;
Oh, is our daughter gone to hell?
Our grief so great no tongue can tell.
12. Good Lord, how her parents did moan,
To think their child was dead and gone;
Our daughter, oh, our daughter is dead,
Her soul is gone, and her spirit fled.
13. Young people, lest this be your case,
Now turn to God and seek his face;
Down on your knees for mercy cry,
Lest you in sin like the daughter die.
Price Five Cents.¹⁴

¹³ Compare the third and seventh stanzas of Mr. Swain's version,—the thought is reminiscent of the following lines of Wigglesworth: *The Day of Doom*, 205:

They wring their hands, their caitiff hands,
And gnash their teeth for terrour,
They cry, they roar, for anguish sore,
And gnaw their tongues for horrour.
But get away without delay,
Christ pities not your cry,
Depart to Hell, there may you yell,
And roar Eternally.

¹⁴ Another text, lately published by Professor Belden,—Balladry in America, *Journal of American*

We are evidently at the source of Mr. Odum's version, which, save for the different sex of the young person, a very minor consideration, is

Folk-Lore, Vol. xxv, no. 95, pp. 18-19,—may be cited here for comparison:

THE WICKED GIRL.

Carroll Co., Ark., from E. D. 1904.

1. Young people, hear and I will tell
A soul I fear has gone to hell
A woman who was young and fair
Who died in sin and dark despair.
2. Her tender parents oft did pray
For her poor soul from day to day
And give her counsel good advice
But she delighted still in vice.
3. She would go to frolics, dance and play
In spite of all her friends could say
I'll turn to God when I am old
And then he will receive my soul.
4. At length she heard the spirit say
Thou sinful wretch forsake thy way
Now turn to God or you shall dwell
Forever in the flames of Hell.
5. No, I'm too young, thus she replied
My comrades all would me deride
The spirit then bid her farewell
And thus consigned the wretch to hell.
6. It was not long till death did come
To call this helpless sinner home
And while she was on her dying bed
She called her friends and this she said:
7. My friends I bid you all farewell
I die, I die, I sink to hell
There must I lie and scream and roll
For God will not receive my soul.
8. My tender parents she addressed
I hope your souls will both be blessed
But your poor child you now may see
But soon shall be in misery.
9. My weeping mother fare you well
The pains I feel no tongue can tell
Dear parents your poor child is lost
Your hopes they are forever crossed.

extremely close to the broadside.¹⁵ The language and imagery being highly imaginative, it quite appeals to the religious sense of the colored people, and has doubtless been widely circulated among them. Of its significance as a *spiritual*, more will be said in a later paragraph.

Form II. *The Melancholy Call*.

A. Death.¹⁶

Death is a melancholy call, a certain judgment
For us all. Death takes the young as well as old
And lays them in his arms so cold.
Tis awful—awful—awful—

I saw a youth the other day.
He looked so young he was so gay.
He trifled all his time away
And dropped into eternity.
Tis awful—awful—awful.

As he lay on his dying bed.
Eternity begins to dread.
He cries O Lord! I see my state:
But now I fear I've come too late.
Tis awful—awful—awful.

His loving parents standing round,
With tears of sorrow dropping down.
He says Oh! father pray for me.
I am going to eternity.
Tis awful—awful—awful.

His tender sister standing by.
Says dearest brother you must die.
Your days on earth will soon be past.
Down to the grave you must go at last
Tis awful—awful—awful.

A few more breaths may be perceived
Before this young man takes his leave.
O father fare-the-well.
I'm drawn by devils down to evil
Tis awful—awful—awful.

The corpse was layed beneath (the ground)
His loving sister standing round
With aching heart,
And troubled mind
To think her brother in hell's confined.
Tis awful—awful—awful.

B. Death is a Melancholy Call.¹⁷

Death is a melancholy call
A certain judgment on us all
It takes the young as well as old,
And folds them in its arms so cold.

There was a youth the other day
In blooming health he looked so gay.
He trifled all his time away
And now he's going to eternity.

As he lay on his dying bed
Eternity he began to dread
He said "O Lord, I view my state
And now I fear I've come too late."

His loving parents standing round
Their tears were falling to the ground
He said "Dear parents, pray for me,
For now I'm going to eternity."

His loving sister standing by
She said, "Dear brother you're bound to die,"
He said "Dear sister, fare you well,
I'm dragged by angels down to hell."

His corpse was laid beneath the ground
With brothers and sisters weeping round
With throbbing hearts and thinking minds
To think in hell their brother's confined.

It has been said that we cannot fairly regard *The Downward Road* and *The Melancholy Call* as two ballads, at least not in the sense that we may regard *Baby Lon* and *Edward*, or *Fair Annie* and *William Taylor* as two ballads. It will not be out of place at this point to give a definition of the term "ballad," in accordance with my theory of origins, which is briefly summed up in the phrase,—*individual invention, plus communal re-creation*.¹⁸ It refers,

¹⁷ Contributed by Professor Belden,—from ms of G. W., Bollinger Co., Mo., who wrote down the ballad in 1906, with the subscription,—"this I heard my mother sing. She learned it when a little girl, after coming to Missouri, but doesn't know from whom."

¹⁸ See my articles, *Folk-Music in America*, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XXII, pp. 72-81, *Native Balladry in America*, *ibid*, pp. 365-373.

¹⁵ Mr. Odum's version:

st. 1. (with chorus)

" 2	v. 1
" "	" 2
" "	" 3
" "	" 4
" 3	" 1
" "	" 2
" "	" 3
" "	" 4

Broadside:

st. 1. (with chorus)

" 5	v. 1
" "	" 2
" 6	" 1
" "	" 4
" 2	" 1
" "	" 2
	not in this text.
st. 3	v. 4

¹⁶ Contributed by Professor Belden,—from Mrs. Lida Jones's ballad-book, compiled in Dade Co., Mo.

not to an event, but to a process, whether we consider *the ballad* as an idea, or *a ballad* as a concrete illustration. We have to do with a dynamic phenomenon. The process is one by which a simple event in human experience, of subjective interest, narrated in simple language, set to a simple melody, is progressively objectivated.¹⁹ We must from this point of view, classify ballads according to themes. Such a classification by definition does not preclude the use of the term *ballad* in the narrower sense as applied to the several historical developments of a given theme.²⁰

As to our homiletic ballad "The Wicked Girl," we may first observe that it illustrates the tendency of the religious consciousness to avail itself of all possible factors in human experience, even of those it denounces, to assert itself the more vigorously, and to maintain itself the more lastingly. The adoption of the ballad form as the vehicle of a rigorous type of Arminian theology, is the acknowledgment, on the part of the religious mind, of the fact of folk-song as an inalienable possession of the human race.²¹ As an aid, moreover, to the study of folk-song, this ballad is in the nature

of a microcosm, illustrating in miniature, the phenomena of the ballad as an *idea*.²²

PHILLIPS BARRY.

Cambridge, Mass.

THE IDENTITY OF THE HASSEN-
PFLUGS IN HAUPTMANN'S
THE FOOL IN CHRIST

There are few contemporary German writers in whose works the subjective element plays such a prominent rôle as it does in the works of Gerhart Hauptmann, which faithfully reflect the various phases of his development. His sociological interests are mirrored, for example, in "Before Sunrise," in "Lonely Lives," in "The Weavers," and elsewhere. His religious leanings find expression among others in "Lonely Lives," "Hannele," "The Sunken Bell," and "The Fool in Christ;" his aesthetic theories are made public in "Greek Spring;" and traces of his dissatisfaction with modern educational methods can be observed in "Lonely Lives," "Colleague Crampton," "The Maidens of Bischofsberg," and several other dramas. Similarly, he is constantly adapting personal experiences to his dramatic and narrative needs; and while he frequently substitutes

¹⁹ In studying the method of this process, the words and music of the ballad *must* be treated as a unit. If we regard "ballad styles" as of significance, we must consider the fact that there are styles in melody as well as in literary expression. The former are perfectly accounted for by my theory of origins. See my article, "The Origin of Folk-Melodies," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. XXIII, no. 90, pp. 440-445.

²⁰ Professor Child already originated such a system of classification,—he listed under one head,—*Lord Randall* and *The Croodlin Doo*. I would go farther,—for instance, *Young Beichan* and *The Turkish Lady*,—*Hind Horn* and *The Kitchie Boy*,—in each case listing under one head ballads now classed as distinct.

²¹ Rev. Cotton Mather, in his Diary, Sept. 29, 1713, puts himself on record as in favor of the homiletic ballad. "I am informed that the minds and manners of many People about the Country are much corrupted by foolish Songs and Ballads. . . . By way of Antidote, I would procure poetical compositions full of Piety, and such as may have a Tendency to advance Truth and Goodness, to be published and scattered into all Corners of the Land."

²² Of the two developments of the theme,—*The Downward Road* is the older,—Mr. Swain traces his version back for more than a century. It originated doubtless as a purely literary composition,—note especially the reminiscences of Wigglesworth, retained even in the late broadside version B. Passing into oral tradition, its history is that of all ballads, progressive objectivation, being the growth in multiplicity of version and impersonality of authorship,—and local subjectivation, or reversion to print. Rev. J. H. Lewis is a factor in subjectivation,—an influence from which Mr. Odum's version, having passed once more into oral tradition, reasserting the dynamic quality of the ballad, has freed itself. No ballad, it should be said, ever died of printers' ink. The paucity of incident, together with the homiletic purpose of the ballad, hinders the development of the so-called ballad style. *The Melancholy Call* is of more recent origin,—whose author in all probability knew *The Downward Road*.